

The Albany HERALD

By Jennifer Maddox Parks
Friday, January 8, 2010

"Georgia Trend" magazine has released a list containing what they consider to be the leaders in the state's power structure system — their 12th edition of the "100 Most Influential Georgians."

Three notable representatives of Southwest Georgia made the list.

Joel Wernick, CEO of Phoebe Putney Health System, was included in this year's edition.

"I am honored and humbled by the selection," he said in a phone interview Friday. "I truly feel the acknowledgment ties back to the success of Phoebe Putney."

In recent years, Phoebe has extended outside Albany into areas such as Worth, Sumter and Colquitt counties — which is what Wernick feels makes both himself and Phoebe stand out as an influential force in Georgia.

"We have been here for almost 100 years," he said. "Amid the turmoil we have continued to meet our mission and extend our mission to other areas. That's as good a reason as any (to be recognized)."

U.S. Sen. Saxby Chambliss, R-Moultrie, made the list this year as well.

"It's an honor to be included in such august company," he said in a statement e-mailed to The Herald.

U.S. Rep. Sanford Bishop, D-Albany, made the cut.

"I want to thank Georgia Trend magazine for naming me among the 100 Most Influential Georgians. I'm honored to be included in the list, and I pledge to continue doing my dead-level best to support legislation that improves the lives of all Georgians, but especially those in Southwest Georgia," Bishop said in a statement Friday.

Some other notables on this year's list, in part, include Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle, State Sen. Tim Golden, D-Valdosta, U.S. Sen. Johnny Isakson, R-Atlanta, and State Labor Commissioner Michael Thurmond.

The selection process for the list takes place in October of each year and is published the

following January. Nominations are accepted, but the decision concerning who makes the cut is made primarily by the magazine's staff.

"We try to make it a diverse group," said "Georgia Trend" Editor-in-Chief and Publisher Neely Young. "There are a lot of people that could make the list."

Compiling the list is done every year to encourage leaders to do something beneficial for others within their circle, Young said.

"We want to encourage people to give back to the community," he said.